

Testimony re: HB2195
Health and Human Services Committee
Monday, February 13, 2017
1:30 p.m.

Dear Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Zack Miller, a practicing audiologist, and I have been in private practice since 2009. I serve those in rural communities of Southeast Kansas.

In 2014 I also took over as the executive officer for the Board of Examiners in the Fitting and Dispensing of Hearing Instruments (KBHAE). Currently, the KBHAE has approximately 360 licensees, including hearing instrument specialists and audiologists. The mission of the KBHAE is to “establish and enforce standards to ensure that the people of Kansas receive competent and ethical hearing aid care”. The KBHAE was established in 1968 and is a fee-funded agency that consists of one part-time executive officer. Statutorily, there are five board members that currently includes, two audiologists, one hearing instrument specialist, and two public members.

I respect the fact that you, as a committee, face difficult decisions regarding many issues. My hope is, after hearing the testimonies given today, you will make a sound choice based on what is best for the hearing instrument consumers of Kansas.

I am testifying in opposition to HB 2195 that would transfer the functions of the KBHAE to the secretary of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS). The reasons are as follows:

Cost effectiveness:

- The KBHAE is a cost-effective, fee-funded agency.
 - Ten percent of its revenue is deposited into the state general fund (SGF) while the remaining ninety percent is deposited into the hearing aid board fee fund.
- The KBHAE operates without utilizing state funds.

Consumer protection:

- The KBHAE works directly with the attorney general's office to address complaints as they are submitted.
- The KBHAE conducts two exams annually, which are essential for consumer protection.
 - Only experienced practitioners, who are knowledgeable and unbiased, are selected as examiners.
 - The exam includes written and practical components.
 - Practical examinations are required to assess the knowledge and hands-on skills that are needed to dispense hearing instruments safely.
- The KBHAE has recently adopted the International Licensing Examination(ILE), which is administered by the International Hearing Society, for its written examination.
 - The ILE is used as the written examination in 40 states.

As a licensed audiologist, I maintain an audiology license through the KDADS, as well as a dispensing license through the KBHAE. I believe that the ability to dispense hearing instruments in the state of Kansas is a privilege. The annual renewal fee of \$125, less than \$11 per month, seems insignificant compared to the dedication to the protection of consumers and licensees that the KBHAE provides. The KBHAE has operated competently, ethically, and honestly for nearly 50 years and I respectfully request your vote against HB 2195 that would reorganize the KBHAE under the KDADS.

Sincerely,

Zack Miller, Au.D., CCC-A